

I believe we have nothing to fear from connecting with Iran, North Korea, China and Russia. We have much to fear from antagonizing these countries. Vice President CHENEY recently called Russia "irresponsible," which angered President Putin of Russia. Name calling and labeling should not be used by any member of the administration. It is a backward, undiplomatic form of communications employed by schoolyard bullies not by high officials of a country like ours which must learn to live in peace with the other great powers in the world.

We connected, engaged, with the Soviet Union in 1973 through the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, CSCE, even while conservatives warned that it was a dangerous concession that the Soviets might interpret as weakness. Instead the CSCE helped speed the fall of the Soviet Union. President Nixon was warned by conservatives not to go to China and yet an era of great diplomacy with China followed his trip.

The column by David Ignatius points out that Ahmadinejad's letter to President Bush "clearly had the backing of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei." In the words of Ignatius "that's like having the support of Vice President CHENEY for a peace feeler."

According to Karim Sadjadpour, an Iranian analyst with the International Crisis Group, opinion polls show that 75 percent of Iranians favor relations with the United States.

There is no guarantee that a policy of engagement will work. But there are no other good options. We can have engagement with Iran and hope they will accept a package we can offer with our allies that will keep them from developing nuclear weapons, or we can learn to live with Iran as a nuclear power, or we can go to war with Iran. War with Iran would have unintended consequences we cannot imagine. It should be obvious that the first of these is the best option.

IT'S TIME TO ENGAGE WITH IRAN

(By David Ignatius)

"Only connect." That was the trademark line of E.M. Forster's great novel "Howards End." And it's a useful injunction in thinking about U.S. strategy toward Iran and the wider conflicts between the West and the Muslim world.

We are in the early stages of what the Centcom commander, Gen. John Abizaid, calls "the first war of globalization, between openness and closed societies." One key to winning that war, Abizaid told a small group of reporters at the Pentagon yesterday, is to expand openness and connection. He called al-Qaeda "the military arm of the closed order." The same could be said of the extremist mullahs in Tehran who are pushing for nuclear weapons.

America's best strategy is to play to its strengths—which are the open exchange of ideas, backed up by unmatched military power. The need for connection is especially clear in the case of Iran, which in isolation has remained frozen in revolutionary zealotry like an exotic fruit in aspic. Yet some in the Bush administration cling to the idea that isolation is a good thing and that connectivity will somehow weaken the West's position. That ignores the obvious lesson of the past 40 years, which is that isolation has usually failed (as in the cases of Cuba and North Korea), while connectivity has usually succeeded (as in the cases of the Soviet Union and China).

A telling example was the decision to engage the Soviet Union in 1973 through the

Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe. At the time, some conservatives argued that it was a dangerous concession that the Soviets might interpret as a symbol of weakness. But the OSCE provided a crucial forum for dissidents in Russia and Eastern Europe, and with astonishing speed the mighty edifice of Soviet power began to crumble. Similar warnings about showing weakness in the face of an aggressive adversary were voiced when President Richard Nixon went to China in February 1972.

I cite this Cold War history because the moment has come for America to attempt to engage revolutionary Iran. The invitation for such a dialogue came this month in a letter to President Bush from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—a man whose rabble-rousing, Israel-baiting career gave him the credentials, if that's the right word, to break a 27-year Iranian taboo on contacts with the Great Satan.

Ahmadinejad's letter clearly had the backing of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. In the American context, that's like having the support of Vice President Cheney for a peace feeler. My own Iranian sources say there is broad consensus in Tehran that it is time for talks with the United States. "Iran wants to start discussions the same way the Chinese wanted discussions" with Nixon, an Iranian businessman named Ali Eftefagh told me in an e-mail this week. "Great Satan doesn't sell anymore. More than half the population was not born 27 years ago, and the broken record does not play well." The Iranian offer of dialogue, he says, "ought to be taken as an opportunity, if only to air out grievances and amplify differences."

I suspect Iran wants dialogue now partly because it perceives America's position in Iraq as weak and its own as strong. That may be true, but so what? Washington should still take yes for an answer. The United States and its European allies this week are crafting a package that, one hopes, will include everything the Iranian people could want—except nuclear weapons. The bundle of goodies should stress connectivity—more air travel to Iran, more scholarships for students, more exchanges, Iranian membership in the World Trade Organization. The mullahs may well reject these incentives as threatening, but that's the point. Their retrograde theocracy can't last long in an open world. This very week, about 40 police officers were injured in a clash with demonstrators at two Tehran universities. One of the hand-lettered protest signs captured in an Iranian photo said: "This is not a seminary, it is a university."

Karim Sadjadpour, an Iranian analyst with the International Crisis Group, noted in Senate testimony last week that opinion polls show 75 percent of Iranians favor relations with the United States. "Embarking on a comprehensive dialogue with Iran would provide the U.S. with the opportunity to match its rhetorical commitment to Iranian democracy and human rights with action," Sadjadpour said. He's right.

There's no guarantee that a policy of engagement will work. The Iranian regime's desire to acquire nuclear weapons may be so unyielding that Tehran and Washington will remain on a collision course. But America and its allies will be in a stronger position for responding to Iranian calls for dialogue. Openness isn't a concession by America, it's a strategic weapon.

TRIBUTE TO CANDY SCHNEIDER

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 8, 2006

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor my dear friend Candy Schneider who is retiring after 33 years of service in the Clark County School District.

Candy has been a teacher of art, humanities and the academically talented at the junior school level as well as a Visual Arts Administrative Specialist for grades K–12 for over three decades. During her career as an educator, Candy has served as the Assistant Director for the School-Community Partnership Program, Chairwoman of the Nevada Arts Council, and Chair of the Arts in Education. Among Candy's many achievements, she has been honored with the Nevada Educator of the Year award, the Excellence in Education Award and a National Gallery of Art State Scholarship. She is also a member of the Arts Council of Henderson and an honorary member of the Henderson Art Association. In addition, Candy has done a tremendous service to my office by coordinating the Congressional Art Contest for the Third Congressional District of Nevada.

Through the years, Candy has served on a variety of local, regional, and national boards and committees including the National Art Educators Association, the National Endowment for the Arts, Nevada School for the Arts, and a host of Clark County School District committees. It is through her work with these institutions that she and I have become good friends. Candy is a lovely woman who pours all her heart and energy into expanding and enriching humanities and art-oriented programs for the children of Clark County.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to honor Candy Schneider for her years of dedicated service to the students in the Clark County School District. Her passion for arts education has truly enriched the lives of the students, colleagues and community members who have been inspired by her over the years. I wish her the best in her retirement.

BEST WISHES FOR A SUCCESSFUL TAIWAN SYMPOSIUM

HON. DONALD M. PAYNE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 8, 2006

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, the Taiwan Chapter of the Democratic Pacific Union will sponsor a symposium this summer (August 12–14) in Taipei, Taiwan. The symposium will include topics such as legislative and democracy, legislature and the electoral process, legislative procedures and rules, legislature and campaign finance. All these topics are very timely and relevant to the legislative process.

Taiwan's efforts in promoting democracy throughout the Pacific regions are laudatory. In addition to the upcoming symposium, the Taiwan Chapter of the Democratic Pacific Union has sponsored other worthy programs such as a training program on hazard mitigation with emphasis on typhoon-related disasters and fellowships for students from Democratic Pacific Union member states to study in